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NEWS RELEASE

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Education Department Reports: 61% of Schools Are Improving, 41% High Performing

PROVIDENCE—In its second annual release of school-performance categories, the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released a report this morning (Tuesday, December 3) that showed that 61 percent of the state's public schools are improving.

The report also showed that 41 percent of the state's schools are high performing.

Last year, only 42 percent of the schools were improving and only 35 percent of the schools were high performing.

The improvements in school performance were across the board. This year, nearly 60 percent of the high schools were improving, a third of the middle schools were improving, and 70 percent of the elementary schools were improving.

At all levels, schools moved into higher performance categories: 16 schools moved from low performing to moderately performing; 19 schools moved from moderately performing to high performing.

The Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education cited 26 schools as the first "Regents' Commended Schools" for improving in both English-language arts and mathematics for two years in a row.

"I'm pleased to announce the first list of Regents' Commended Schools," said James A. DiPrete, chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. "It's a list of schools that covers 16 districts from around the state. These schools have led the way in making progress, and they serve as an example and model for the other public schools."

"We're seeing excellent progress across the state, and especially in our elementary schools," said Peter McWalters, commissioner of elementary and secondary education. "Nearly 70 percent of our elementary schools are improving, and that's true in schools across the state--rural, suburban, and urban. We still have a lot of work ahead of us, however, and the state will continue to focus its efforts on support for the low-performing schools."

The Vartan Gregorian Elementary School at Fox Point, where the school-performance categories were released, is one of the Regents' Commended Schools, and it is the only school in the state to meet each of its 16 targets on all the state's subtests for two years in a row.

The school-performance categories are based on the state's assessments in English-language arts and mathematics over the past five years.

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The department also released today its first list of “Learning-Support Indicators,” statistical data on school climate, instructional practices, parent engagement, student health, time lost from school, and dropouts. This information was derived in part from the SALT Survey, which is administered annually to all students, teachers, and parents.

Though this year’s release of school-performance categories showed that half of the state’s low-performing schools are improving, it also showed that 35 of the public schools (12 percent) have been low performing and not improving for two years in a row. The department will focus on these schools as it continues its efforts toward school improvement.

“We’re definitely moving in the right direction,” said Patrick A. Guida, chairman of the Regents’ Committee on Progressive Support and Intervention. “There’s been admirable progress, but every district has a lot of work to do.”

A complete list of school-performance categories and learning-support indicators, as well as background information and the list of the Regents’ Commended Schools, has been posted on the department’s Web site, www.ridoe.net.